THE Reconstructionist

Vol. X. February 9, 1945 Shebat 26, 5705 No. 20

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Dedicated to the advancement of Judaism as a religious civilization, to the upbuilding of Israel's ancient homeland, and to the furtherance of universal freedom, justice and peace.

the Reconstructionist

is published bi-weekly for twenty consecutive issues, starting in October, by the Jewish Reconstructionist Foundation, Inc., 15 West 86th Street, New York 24, N. Y. Subscription $2.00 per year; 10c per copy; foreign 25c extra; membership in the Foundation, $5.00 per year, including subscription to *The Reconstructionist*. Reentered as second class matter October 3, 1935, at the Post Office at New York, N. Y., under the Act of March 3, 1879.

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AMONG OUR CONTRIBUTORS

NATHAN A. BARACK is a Chaplain in the United States Army. In civilian life, he was rabbi in Phoenix, Arizona. The article here published was submitted before his induction.

GRACE GOLDIN is a frequent contributor to THE RECONSTRUCTIONIST, familiar to our readers for her biographical portraits of famous Jewish personalities.

EDWARD T. SANDROW is a Chaplain in the United States Army recently returned to the United States after a long tour of overseas duty.

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THE Reconstructionist

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EDITORIALS

THE CRUCIAL PROBLEM OF COMMUNAL DEMOCRACY

THE American Jewish Conference, at its last convention, decided that the "American Jewish scene" was not within the scope of the purposes for which it was organized. But any effort by American Jews in behalf of Jews in other countries must inevitably be affected by the specific conditions of American Jewish life. Thus the Conference is forced, willy-nilly, to take cognizance of some of the problems of American Jewry. This is evident in action recently taken by the Executive Committee of the Conference. It adopted a resolution expressing its opposition to the national budgeting service proposed by the officers of the Council of Jewish Federations and Welfare Funds. The Executive Committee of the Conference states that it "opposes the adoption by the Council of the authority to evaluate aims, purposes and validity of program of any of the agencies applying for funds."

The reasons for the Conference's opposition to the proposal that the Council should advise its constituent local organizations how they should budget their funds are not stated. They are, however, obvious and, in our opinion, justified. The issue is not a new one. It was raised at a meeting of the Council in Atlanta, Georgia, on February 1-3, 1941. At that time the proposal was submitted to a referendum of affiliated organizations and the referendum revealed such strong opposition that the project was, for the time, abandoned. The opposition contended that the leaders of the Council of Jewish Federations and Welfare Funds had not been democratically elected by American Jewry and represented, for the most part, a viewpoint and interests remote from those of the majority of Jews. They had attained their position of leadership because of their services to Jewish philanthropy and because of prestige that they commanded by reason of their social and economic standing in the general community; they had not been chosen because of special interest in Jewish life, understanding of Jewish problems (other than those of an eleemosynary nature), familiarity with Jewish culture or devotion to Jewish religion. They should not, therefore, have the power to pass a sentence of life or death on any Jewish movement or cause through the advice that they give.

It has been urged, in refutation of these arguments, that the advice on budgeting given by the Council would not be mandatory. That is correct in theory, but in practice the effect would be almost the same as if the suggestions of the National Budgeting Committee were binding. For the Boards of the local organizations are also representative mostly of those Jews whose major interest is philanthropy and who have not given, and are reluctant to give, much thought and attention to other Jewish problems. They would, therefore, welcome relief from responsibility for investigating the claims of movements in which they are not interested, such as Jewish education, Hebrew culture and Zionism, to name but a few. Thus they would tend to accept without question the recommendations of their national leaders.

That is the danger, but to call attention to it is not enough. Even to defeat the proposal and remove the danger is not enough. For the demand for a national budgeting service arises in response to a real need. Local Federations and similar organizations cannot give that careful study to the problems of Jewish life which could be provided by the research facilities of a national organization. If the entire Jewry of America would select those Jews who are most devoted to the interests of the Jewish people and most understanding of its needs, the task of advising local communities on problems of the budget could safely be entrusted to them. It is the absence of a democratic set-up for Jewish community life in America that makes the proposal of a national budgeting service objectionable. The evil it proposes to remedy is real, but the cure would be worse than the disease.

Jews should be interested, however, not merely in avoiding a dangerous remedy, but in discovering and applying a safe and effective one. The task of approving a budget must be the responsibility of a democratically elected body representing American Jewry as a whole and constitutionally responsible to its electorate. It is clear that the Council of Jewish Federations and Welfare Funds recognizes the need of a national budget service to advise local Jewish communities on the financial requirements of American Jewry's welfare program. What militates against the achievmeent of this purpose is the lack of adequate democratic procedures to prevent its abuse. Let the Council then create the necessary democratic machinery. Let it urge the transformation of its local constituent organizations into democratic Community Councils, extending them to include representatives not merely of philanthropic institutions, but of congregations, Zionist organizations, Jewish labor groups and all Jewish associations with a survivalist program. Let these Community Councils, in convention assembled, adopt a constitution, and let the Budgeting Committee of the Executive, elected under the constitution, submit its proposals to the national convention for discussion and adoption.

If and when the Council of Federations and Welfare Funds has the vision to see and the will to satisfy this need for democracy in budgeting the moneys contributed by the American Jewish community, it will become the effective spokesman of American Jewry, and will occupy that position of leadership which the American Jewish Conference, contrary to the hopes of many of its adherents, renounced at its last convention. Will the Council rise to this opportunity?

JUSTICE THAT IS BLIND INDEED

THE two young men who shot Lord Moyne in Cairo have been condemned to death. Eliahu Hakim and Ephraim Ben-Zur should not

die for their crime. They murdered, not for robbery, nor out of purely personal motives, but in order to arouse the world to the injustice which the Jewish poeple is suffering at the hands of a government. This was political assassination, and as such, deserves the particular punishment generally meted out for such crimes. The punishment is not usually death.

The failure of the Egyptian government to recognize the Lord Moyne assassination as a political murder is further evidence of the very injustice from which the Jews are suffering, and which precipitated the crime. The Egyptian court treated this act as a cold-blooded murder, and the two men as though they were hardened criminals instead of wrath-crazed idealists.

This inability to make a necessary and justified distinction between two types of violent men is part of a larger disease, a spiritual myopia, induced by political and economic cataracts, resulting in the inability to see beyond the most obvious appearances. Two men kill an Englishman. A routine case of murder, apparently. And when the two men stand up in court, and cry out for their people, in whose name they did the deed, the correspondents, who are the microphones to the world, are ordered not to take notes. The outcries are censored.

There are Jews and Arabs in Palestine. The larger number of Arabs were there first. The Jews are trying to get in. The Arabs object. We cannot overrule the objections of the Arabs, say the authorities. But when the Jews cry out that they have an age-long claim, a legal claim, a tragic need, a life-giving energy, that the Arabs have millions of empty acres—the cries are stifled. Only the obvious, hard fact interests the government.

Before the sentence of death could be authorized the hanging of the two men had to be sanctioned by the Mufti in the name of God. The sentence, however, could never be sanctioned in God's name according to Jewish traditional conceptions of how God judges. Our Rabbis used to say that the quality of the Holy One, Blessed be He, is unlike that of man. In the courts of law, two men come before the judge, the prosecutor and the counsel for the defense; in God's court, He is both prosecutor and defender. Our Rabbis understand the divine quality of seeing a person, an act, an event steadily and *whole,* of understanding the complicated character of life and of motives and urges. The Mufti's God may justify the death penalty for these misguided youths, but we Jews will never recognize the God of Egypt whose behavior in court is like that of any *basar va-dam.*

To add injury to injury in this unhappy trial, a correspondent reports that the international lawyers find this case most interesting, for it sets a precedent for the trials of those war criminals who will claim that they committed the many murders in the name of patriotism. Thus we may infer that, unless the two Jews are hanged, there will be no case against the Nazi exterminators. If the lawyers need two more Jewish lives in order to convict the Nazi butchers, the world may begin now to prepare for the exoneration of the Nazis before the courts of the nations.

The enormity of comparing these Palestinian boys with the criminals of Germany is the measure of the ethical deterioration from which even decent and fair-minded people suffer in this war. It reveals the tremendous moral reconstruction which must accompany the reconstruction of cities, farms, industry and trade. Like the famous Dreyfus case, the Moyne case uncovers a degeneration in society, a degeneration of moral values, which must constitute the major task for those who hope to build a better world.

TO A FUTURE JEWISH HISTORIAN

A RECENT despatch from abroad in the Yiddish press gives a moving account of the last days of the octogenarian Jewish historian Simon Dubnow, the author of a standard ten volume history of the Jews. The Nazis had herded thousands of Jews, among them the aged scholar, into a ghetto in Riga and had begun their systematic extermination. Methodically, with professional precision, Professor Dubnow recorded and described in his notebook the terror that raged in the Ghetto. The record ends the day before the venerable scholar was marched out to a nearby wood and shot. His journal was his legacy to future Jewish historians, a first hand account of a small segment of the fate of European Jewry in the opening years of the fifth decade of the twentieth century.

Such accounts, even if less meticulously ordered, will probably run into the thousands. The temptation, already rooting itself in Jewish consciousness, will be overwhelmingly strong, to see the mass destruction of Jewry in the war years as the supreme act of *Kiddush Hashem* of all Jewish history. Some years ago, Dr. Simon Bernfeld collected the records of Jewish martyrdom of the past and gave them to the Hebrew reading public under the title "The Book of Tears" in three volumes. The chronicles, gathered by Simon Bernfeld, tell the touching story of the tens and hundreds of Jews who rose to wear the crown of martyrdom in 1096, 1348, 1648 — the black years when, up and down the towns that dot the river valleys of Europe, the agonized cry of the *Shema* could be heard rising above the pyres. Does the theme, then, remain the same, ever the same? Are the black years repeating themselves on a vast scale, so that even three plus thirty volumes cannot now suffice for the new Book of Tears?

Reflection on the Jewish martyrdom of the past will reveal that it differed in at least two important respects from the wholesale slaughter of our times. A Jew who surrendered to the knife or the fagot knew that he had an alternative. That alternative, the baptismal fount, he deliberately spurned. This was *Kiddush Hashem,* the sanctification of God's name, the ultimate attestation to a faith which the devices of evil men could not stamp out. So, *Kiddush Hashem,* as Jews conceived it, always implied a choice between life and death. On those who chose death rather than life without the faith, the crown of martyrdom rested. *Kiddush Hashem* is too rare and sacred a jewel of human conduct to be lightly bandied about. True, the Jewish heart yearns to find the meaning—and if not the meaning, at least the word—that will lift the Jewish tragedy to the level of the epic. It fastens upon the hallowed term *Kiddush Hashem* wherewith to cast a ray of light over the numberless dead who, confronted with no choice, were slaughtered with machine methods by machine men. However, a new and positive meaning of *Kiddush Hashem* is afforded by a consideration of the second aspect in which Jewish martyrdom of the past differed from the terror and death visited upon European Jewry in our day.

The *kadosh* (martyr) of the past inwardly accepted his imminent death. It was God's will and, as such, there could be no rebellion against it, no rebellion either against God or against the rod of His wrath who carried out the decree. The old chronicler reports with pride that "they (the martyrs) accepted the Heavenly decree." Only on rare occasions does one read of Jews who, facing death at the hands of a mob, flung themselves against the attackers and went down fighting.

The Jewish historian of the future will have at hand not scattered, exceptional instances of Jews who fought back with reckless daring, defiant to the end, but a long, thrilling chapter. He will record not only the revolts of the Warsaw and Bialystok ghettoes, but the even more amazing story of the Jewish underground organizations which, day after day, carried on, in mortal danger, the work of rescuing Jewish children. Only fragments of the story are now known. When the whole tale is pieced together, a new type of *kadosh* will have emerged on the stage of Jewish history, the men and women of all parties and all ages who carried out the work of rescue, work in which a single slip could have but one consequence. Between the *kadosh* of old, who passively accepted the decree, and the French, Dutch or Belgian Jewess (women seem to have predominated) who schemed and risked everything to smuggle a Jewish child to freedom, there stretches a great gulf in outlook. For all that, they belong to the same exalted company; the one, the exponent of dying for *Kiddush Hashem,* the other making vividly real the meaning of fighting for *Kiddush Hashem.*

The categories change with changing times, the idea remains, and acquires fresh meaning. Nor have all the possible categories been exhausted. In their unbreakable steadfastness, the martyrs of old wrote the last commentary on holy dying. The battle in which one courts nothing for oneself but possible death, that others may live, is a glowing illustration of holy fighting. The category of holy living alone remains to be explored. Perhaps only those who know what fighting the battles of the Lord means are equipped to translate holy living into a reality. Perhaps even those who feel the inspiration of their example from afar may be moved to consider the possibilities of holy lving. To die, to fight, to live on a plane worthy of the immortality of history is a queer progression. Stranger things have happened in Jewish history, but none more wonderful.

REALITIES AND VALUES

OUR BEST ASSURANCE THAT Palestine will be reconstituted as a Jewish Commonwealth is the indomitable faith and will of the Yishuv. Undismayed by the obstacles to this objective which opportunistic politicians keep imposing, the Palestine Jewish community assumes more and more of the responsibilities of self-government. The *Vaad Leumi,* for example, is now seeking from the government authority to impose taxes on Jews for Jewish purposes. In Tel Aviv, a recent conference of Jewish attorneys listened to a plea by one of their number, Mordecai Eliash, that they prepare a draft constitution for the projected Commonwealth. Our readers may recall the anxiety expressed at the latest Reconstructionist Conference concerning unpreparedness for Jewish statehood in Palestine. (See the article, "Preparing for the Jewish Commonwealth," by Samuel Dinin, and the discussion on it as recorded in *The Reconstructionist,* Volume X, No. 13.) It is reassuring to note that the legal minds of the Yishuv are occupying themselves with the problem.

▼

SOME NEW ENTERPRISE IS always being launched in Palestine. One that should prove of especial interest to Jews in the Diaspora is the establishment of a new motion picture company in Nathania. Many Jews have commented on the paucity of films that represent Jews in any other capacity than as objects of commiseration. All the heroic aspects of Jewish life — the manifestations of creative will, of achievement against obstacles, of high adventure—are omitted. That is as much as we can ex-

pect so long as the Jewish movie magnates are Jews only in respect to "religion" and religionists only in respect to the *mitzvah* of charity. But a motion picture industry in Palestine would mirror the romance, the adventure, the courage and resourcefulness of the renascent Jewish spirit. It would make the world sit up and take notice of Jewish types hitherto unportrayed in the art of the Western world, types that arouse neither contempt nor pity, but honest admiration.

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ANOTHER INTERESTING LITTLE item from Palestine. In the Poel Hamizrachi colony of Sedei Eliyahu, a synagogue was recently named after Henrietta Szold. This is the first instance on record of a synagogue named after a woman. It is interesting to note that this innovation stands to the credit of an Orthodox Jewish labor group. But is it not anomalous that a person like Henrietta Szold, who is so religious that it is appropriate for a synagogue to be named after her, may not be called to the reading of the Torah, even in that synagogue? And why? Only because she is a woman.

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THE *Christian Register,* THE official monthly of the American Unitarian Association, suggests the creation of a "Council of Liberal Religion," in which the Unitarians, Universalists, and other liberal groups, including Jews, would be members. None of the members of the proposed Council would be required to "surrender any elements in their separate traditions . . . but all would recognize the paramount value of the elements that are common to all." This is an appealing proposal. In the situation that will confront the world after the war, there are two great dangers which all liberal faiths will have a common interest in averting. There is danger that disillusionment with our civilization may lead men to scoff at all idealism and to adopt an ungodly cynicism. There is also the danger that, baffled by problems too complicated for immediate solution, men may seek escape from social responsibility in an otherworldly mysticism or in submission to an authoritarian hierarchy. Liberal faiths should unite to make religion safe for democracy and to enable democracy to fulfil itself through religion.

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THE FESTIVAL OF JEWISH Arts which has been presented by Jacob Weinberg in New York annually in recent years, will have its Fifth Anniversary on February 17th at Town Hall. The courage and persistence of Dr. Weinberg in organizing this Festival, frequently against odds, have their true reward in the fact that cities in other parts of the country are beginning to offer similar festivals that approximate its general scope. For this year, Dr. Weinberg has arranged a varied program, including vocal and instrumental solos, music for string orchestra, chorus and a children's pageant group.

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WE HAVE SEVERAL TIMES REferred to the effort to organize an association of Jewish news weeklies in America. That has been effected at a convention recently held in Chicago. The organization calls itself the "American Association of English-Jewish Newspapers." Its purpose is described in the preamble to its By-Laws and Rules of Conduct as being the "advancement of Jewish journalism, the attainment of the highest literary and professional standards, and the maintenance of a militant, fearless approach to all Jewish problems."

Strange as it may seem, these organs of publicity have given little publicity to the proceedings of their own convention. Their statement of purposes is interesting,

and we are eagerly waiting to see how they will translate these purposes into common action. We hope that they will not continue to be as reticent as they have so far been about the problems that confront them and the solutions proposed.

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IT IS COMMON FOR CHURCHES to "view with alarm" the increased divorce rate in America. Usually that alarm expresses itself in demands for more stringent divorce laws. But the Ministerial Association of Vincennes, Ind., has exhibited a more sensible response to the admittedly deplorable situation. As reported in a release of the Religious News Service, the Association plans the formation of a committee on divorces and the home of which "the function would be to keep ministers informed of pending divorce suits, cooperate with the proper authorities in attempting to prevent divorce, work with the courts and county welfare boards to protect the interests of the children in broken homes, study the problems of premarital counseling and parent education, and be available for counsel."

The Chaplain Will Also Return

By EDWARD T. SANDROW

FOR a period of two and a half years epistles from Chaplains of all denominations have been finding their way to my desk. Some of these Chaplains have lived with me. Others have bared their thoughts and emotions when they were not even aware of it. These letters and conversations are the basis for this study. They reveal facts which should be of serious concern to those who are religious leaders as well as to all others to whom the future of the synagogue is of utmost importance.

The Importance of the Chaplains' Viewpoint

America has thousands of Chaplains in the Armed Forces. Many of these men have given up the comforts of a civilian pastorate or congregation and have enlisted in the service of the nation. Many come from influential communities, and their pulpit utterances set the tone for group action. From their ranks will come leading lights in the organized religious life of America. In their corps are men who have made their mark in the pulpit. Consequently, what they say or think is vital for an understanding of current and post-war religious problems.

Let it be said at the outset that the opinions expressed here represent those of a majority. They are not a unanimous judgment. In addition, the reader should realize that it is difficult for a writer to be objective in a matter which touches his own thought processes, his hopes, his future. It may be that some general findings here set forth are merely my own reactions to a situation which is critical but not insoluble.

The findings are disturbing. They are all the more so because they represent the normal reactions of able, sincere men. These men are not rebels. They are not negativistic. They are not chronic complainers. As indicated before, a goodly proportion of them are among the ablest of our peacetime clergy, well trained, and eminently capable; and they have ministered to thousands upon thousands of service men, both in this country and in combat areas.

The Committee of Army and Navy

Religious Activities of the J.W.B., the Military Ordinariate (Catholic) and the Commission on Army and Navy Chaplains (Protestant) have done a splendid job in supplying the Army and Navy with Chaplains and with religious material. Nevertheless, these agencies are not directly responsible for the vast field of organized religious life in America. These organizations exist only on a quasi-temporary basis and are not *the* Church or *the* Synagogue as we understand those terms. Credit must be given these groups for activities which do them honor in the American scene. But in themselves they are not the religious voice of America. They do not represent the millions of civilian church and synagogue adherents who shape the policies of communal institutions dedicated to religious education and worship. In this article we deal with the non-military, the vaster and more permanent civilian houses of worship and their parent bodies, their programs, platforms, outlook and future as analyzed by my Chaplain correspondents and friends.

Discontent with the Ineffectiveness Of Organized Religion

These Chaplains are almost unanimous in feeling that for a long time organized religious groups have done an ineffective job. This is especially true of Protestants and Jews. They stress the fact that most communal activities, educational and philanthropic, are controlled by secularist forces. These forces have pushed religion into a secondary place in American life. Religion has been carefully kept out of political, communal and international affairs and, to most thinking people, it has therefore become watery and insignificant. They feel that *the* Church and *the* Synagogue have placed a quietus on the economic and social outpourings of the prophets. The failure of ministerial and rabbinical agencies to have a voice in the improvement of the lot of the common man in spite of well prepared pronouncements on social justice is of heartfelt concern to the Chaplains. Many soldiers and sailors to whom they minister are not unaware of this fact. The call of religion is not heard, nor does it effect a change in the moral structure of society. People worship in churches and synagogues. For the most part the prayers and preachments do not remain with them when they return to their homes and businesses. The worshiper knows or cares little about the moral and social implications of the prayers he recites. Many a hospital, educational agency, communal center, is headed by men who, while members of religious institutions, are not only indifferent to the message of religion but are, in fact, antagonistic to the church and to the minister, who is the symbol of a living church. Yet support for these social agencies is derived in large measure from church and synagogue people.

Discontent with Inadequacy of Religious Education

Secondly, they are tragically aware of the inefficiency of our entire religious educational program in America. They declare that, when the time comes for them to return to civilian pursuits, they will concern themselves primarily with child, youth and adult education. They regret that preoccupation with insignificant community meetings and engagements—this "ladies auxiliary" and this "orphan home" and this "invocation"—have kept them from their fundamental task to teach and keep teaching. They bemoan the fact that their respective theological seminaries never taught them how to teach or to supervise a school. Adequate courses in pedagogy or in the teachnique of

school administration were considered "too modern for the curriculum of the seminary." Consequently there is the feeling of guilt on the part of the Chaplains because of the inadequate religious background of the men they serve.

Revolt Against Trivialities of Peace-Time Demands on Ministry

The Chaplains for the most part reflect on their congregational activities and become filled with a sense of frustration and futility. Many a Chaplain dreads the thought of returning to a "private club" of socially compatible people rather than an institution of the spirit dedicated to God and mankind. They are concerned lest they once again become involved in a round of insignificant duties. They do not want to be made buffers between petty people contending for congregational honors or offices; traveling salesmen for God, pleading with mothers to bring their children to services; purveyors of soporific lectures to non-congregational bodies who use the church or synagogue center as a meeting place; money raisers for this cause and that, including the funds for a thousand and one communal and extra-communal agencies, etc. Now, none of these activities can in themselves be considered unnecessary or wrong. But the time consumed in their operation militates against study and preaching and those personal duties associated with the ministerial life. One Jewish Chaplain in contemplating these aspects of his career wrote, "What a grind the whole community set-up appears to be. What a waste of one's life. Such pettiness, such littleness, such nothingness."

Complaint of Inadequate Preparation for Ministry

It is not unusual to find Chaplains expressing deep resentment and criticism of their respective theological seminaries. Many men have been ordained without the basic training so necessary in the pulpit. They have no clearly defined concept or idea of God, no knowledge of people, and no ability to do the type of research required for teaching and preaching. They blame the timidity of their fellow alumni, the aloofness and cynicism of many of their professors.

Many Chaplains refer, time and time again, to a sense of "personal inadequacy." Many are convinced that it is only in their working with and ministering to soldiers and sailors that they discovered the true meaning of the ministry. For the first time they are aware of the human being's need for prayer and the efficacy of the scriptural lesson. For once they understand the therapeutic value of prayer to the individual. The man on the battlefield yearns for such spiritual expression. The Chaplain has never come in contact with such deep desires in civilian life. One Chaplain has written in this vein, "When the war is over, my job will be to teach people the meaning of prayer. An example will be shown by me. No longer will my aim be to be "a regular fellow," a "good sport," "popular," no matter what my parishioners want their minister to be. Enough of such shallowness and babbitry!" The men in the service have nothing but contempt for the Chaplain who is a back-slapper, hale and hearty and superficial. The Chaplains are therefore determined to rid communal life of such superficiality even if it means less public approbation and less publicity.

Worry About Psychological and Economic Readjustments After War

Lastly, the Chaplains sense that their lot in civilian life will be no different from that of service men in general. Their economic status as white collar

workers will be a trying one. Moreover, as veterans, they have other problems in common with the discharged soldier or sailor. They are aware of the fact that they will have to return to congregants, many of them good and honorable people, who have, however, not suffered through the experiences of war, with its fire and torture and hell, people who have not gone through the spiritual and moral metamorphosis through which the men in the service have passed. They fear the inertia of religious institutions and feel that, as a body, they are not powerful enough to change the pre-war state of affairs in spite of their new-found vision. Many will come back on fire to *do* things in their churches and synagogues and with them, things that are real, vital, necessary. Older ministers and laymen will meet their enthusiasm with coldness. Congregations that have supplemented the income of some Chaplains will assume that they have been enriching their "pastor" or rabbi," when actually the fiscal status of the Chaplains has remained frozen and static in a time of a highly increased cost of living, and when civilian laymen's incomes have doubled, trebled, expanded without limit. There is, too, the dread that they will be accused of suffering from "inflated egos" just because they want change, or that they are victims of "war neuroses" because they talk in broader, universal terms.

It is interesting to note how many Chaplains are unwilling to return to conventional congregations or parishes and to conduct them in the conventional way. Yet the economic factor stares them in the face. They have families. They do not want to starve. Much of the zeal may evaporate because of the social demands of community life. Many Chaplains are willing to go through the hardships which are inevitable if they refuse to play into the hands of timidity, self-deception and selfish individualism. Many are worried lest organized religion in general be relegated to the innocuous role of a week-end spiritual party. They do not want to surrender to vulgarity, inconsistency, pettiness. There are no assurances that some will not have to swallow their pride, deny the call of higher idealism and keep on wrestling with themselves as they did in pre-war days all for the sake of bread and butter. They do not want their pent up dynamism, generated by war experiences, to be dissipated, their ardor for a more equitable social order to cool, their protest that religion's voice be heard in racial and international affairs to be stifled.

No doubt most Chaplains will be welcomed back enthusiastically, although some congregations will utilize the temporary leave as an opportunity for a final separation. Some Chaplains will not desire to return to their congregations but will request new placements. Most will come back to their original communities. They hope that their desire to rouse their people will be better understood. No doubt, encouragement will come to them from certain quarters. From older, frustrated colleagues, understanding laymen, social thinkers, honest educators who know only too well that, if organized religion is not to die of anemia, it must undergo a spiritual revolution that will shake it from some of its lethargy, and identify it with all forward looking, constructive social movements. The Church and the Synagogue cannot lag behind. The foundations of our world are being pounded by the surging billows of war and post-war change. Men's relation to God and to their fellow men are being colored by every minute happening. Organized religion must let its eyes take in the entire panorama of social,

moral and international problems. The profession of the ministry cannot dissociate itself from all the ramifications of human relationships. The Chaplain who has been an active participant in the global war, must, therefore, be concerned that the world to which he must eventually return be that kind of world for which he and the men with him thought they were fighting.

Needed — A Sense of Destiny*

By NATHAN A. BARACK

How the Sense of Destiny Functioned in Jewish Life

WHETHER we accept the traditional or the critical interpretation of our historical holidays, whether we believe that they were ordained by God essentially in their present form or that they evolved during a period of time, the fact that they came into permanent existence and assumed their ultimate character is deeply significant. It signifies that we were a living people with a sense of destiny. Because we were living, we felt poignantly the pains inflicted on our national body. Our bitter experiences were so deeply engraved on our hearts and minds that they became part of our conscious memory. We responded to our collective sorrows and joys as an individual reacts to the sad and joyous events in his life.

Our firm conviction that our hardships and triumphs were a manifestation of a rational Providence gave our memories lasting meaning. God decreed our enslavement in Egypt. He sent Moses to redeem us. Even Pharoah's resistance to the liberation was divinely influenced. (This possibly explains the comparative infrequency of sentiments of vengeance in Jewish sacred literature. Only the belief in a God who creates light *and* darkness can explain that remarkable poetic passage in the Midrash in which God, forbids the angels to sing His praises while the Egyptians were drowning in the Red Sea. Having been presented with evidence of their extreme cruelty—a fragmant of a wall with an Israelite tot sunk into it—He condemns them to death, but He laments their destruction because they, too, are His creatures.) Most important, the redeemer is not an intermediary but God himself. If God had not brought about our redemption, we should *still* be slaves in Egypt; no mere accident would have freed us.

Our erstwhile sense of destiny is most graphically demonstrated by the ritual and lore of Pesah, but it is evident to some degree in the observances of all our holidays. (Those holidays, in turn, with their systems of symbols and ritual tended to perpetuate the moral significance of the historical events that they commemorated). In the centuries following Bar Kochba's rebellion, we experienced many national defeats but no victory comparable in magnitude to that of the Maccabees. Minor triumphs were probably observed, as recorded in Megilat Taanit (Sabbath 13 b, as interpreted by Rashi). It was only, in the words of a later rabbi, when persecution became incessant, that minor holidays, too, ceased to evolve.

*We publish this article as a stimulating contribution to Jewish religious thinking. The opinions expressed are not necessarily those of the editors, but we feel that they merit earnest consideration.

At all times, however, our sense of destiny prevailed. It showed itself in how eagerly we celebrated our historical holidays. "In every generation one should feel as though he himself participated in the Exodus from Egypt." Our sense of destiny revealed itself also in how we met frequent vilification without the inner servility that is the mark of those who suffer blindly and are unable to rebel. The medieval Jew, wearing his yellow badge, was yet psychologically less affected by his enemies than many of us living under far more liberal conditions. It is true that the Jew was able to face daily calumny without inner shame because he considered himself a member of the Chosen People. However, his belief in chosenness stemmed from a sense of destiny, as is evident from innumerable references in Biblical and later Jewish literature. God chose the Israelites to be *a kingdom of priests, a holy nation,* a *treasured people* (Ex. 19, Deuter. 7). The prayer, "Thou hast chosen us from amongst all the peoples," was motivated neither by conceit nor by disguised inferiority but by gratitude for a purposeful life, lovingly sanctified by God with uplifting commandments. Our fathers felt that they were the bearers of a holy way of life; *hence,* they were chosen. Some of us are inclined to apologize for this feeling. But the Jews actually were the adherents of a holier way of life, and their constant association with the nations of the world made them aware of the fact. With some Jews the belief in their belonging to a chosen people deteriorated into a disparagement of non-Jews, but that was not in harmony with the true spirit of Judaism. Our religious leaders, on the other hand, felt that the nations of the world were also destined to acknowledge the sovereignty of God. The *Alenu* prayer, recited at all services, which begins with "It is our duty to praise the Lord . . . since *He hath not made* us like the nations of other lands" (ascribing the responsibility to God), culminates in the hope that "all children will call upon Thy name, when Thou wilt turn unto Thyself all the wicked of the earth."

The Modern Jew's Lack of a Sense of Destiny

That we now lack the profound sense of destiny which we once possessed is obvious. In many of us, including the religious and the nationalistic, there exist feelings of self-inadequacy. We attach undue importance to statements concerning us by both friends and foes. This is symptomatic, for a people conscious of a sublime destiny does not unduly depend on its friends nor is it cowed by its enemies. "The Forgotten Ally" and "Under Cover" probably attracted a preponderant proportion of Jewish readers, not only because the problems those books discuss concern us Jews most, but also because, in one way or another, they deal with what appear to us the causes of our feeling of insecurity.

With regard to Palestine, we do not have the tenacious faith that our ancestors possessed. We endeavor not only to present our case to the princes of the world, which is proper—but we place our trust in them! When they make a desirable pronouncement, we are excessively elated; when they do not respond favorably, we are extremely disheartened.

Our lack of a sense of destiny is also evident in our attitude toward those ultimate religious concepts, which, in the past, induced in us that sense of destiny. We subordinate our basic religious principles to what we consider generally accepted doctrines. This is apparent in our attitude to democracy. Modern theoretical democracy was born when the religious ideals of Judaism and Christianity won their way into the minds of the

world's thinkers and dreamers (although the humanists rejected organized religion because they identified it with the failures of those who professed it). The eighteenth century teachers of democracy promulgated it by an appeal to the principle that all men are "endowed by their Creator" with equal rights. Yet, nowadays, we do not maintain that we believe in democracy because its ideals flow naturally from Judaism, but we attempt to prove the value of Judaism because its ethical principles form the basis of democracy. There is a distinction between praising the child because of its parentage and praising the parent because of his offspring.

Generally, we feel that we do not "belong." Some of us seek to retain our identity, although we feel that we shall always be a minority. Others — a larger number than we should care to admit— would desire to lose identity, if they were permitted. Unless they have a sense of destiny, minorities that do not hope profoundly to become part of the majority — that can happen, of course, also when the majority accepts the way of life of the minority — feel that they do not belong. Those who do have a sense of destiny feel always that they belong even when the majority loses its normal sense of belonging in time of grave crisis, when its foundations are shaken. For they belong to something more permanent than the transitional. In the words of the psalmist, "Therefore we will not fear, though the earth do change, and though the mountains be moved into the heart of the seas. . . . Nations were in tumult, kingdoms were moved; He uttered His voice, the earth melted. . . . Come behold the works of the Lord, who made desolations in the earth. Who maketh wars to cease unto the ends of the earth . . . The Lord of Hosts is with us, the God of Jacob is our high tower." (Psalms 46).

For this type of sense of destiny, which we once possessed but now lack, there is no adequate substitute. Jewish nationalism and social reform, it should now be clear, can be sustained only by those who have a sense of destiny.

Can We Recover the Sense of Destiny?

Since our loss of a sense of destiny is due to the same factors that caused our general irreligiosity,* it is likely that the same forces that are leading us to a maturer monotheism will also impel us to regain our sense of destiny. For although faith in God and a belief in destiny are not identical, they are closely related. Our historical experiences have led us to become disillusioned with the accepted concept of God. We have reached the first stage on the road to a maturer theism, and although, as the various discussions by intelligent and religious individuals indicate, at the present moment the conception of the maturer monotheism has not yet crystallized for us, yet there are indications of its trend. Because it is an organic outgrowth of traditional Judaism, its roots can be found in our sacred literature.

The Bible does not begin with a description of the essence of God but with a statement of God as Creator. The concept of God as Creator was vivid to the prophets. That is the only way that He is known to us. Everything in the universe, from the simplest plant to the most complex organism, seeks growth. Civilization's various ideologies and systems are, upon final analysis, concerned with in-

*See "God as a Personal Force" and "Indispensable, a Prophetic Approach," The Reconstructionist, Vol. VII, No. 9 and Vol. VIII., No. 7. Both articles are reprinted in *"The Tale of a Wonderful Ladder,"* Bloch, 1943.

dividual and social existence. God's universe manifests a unity of substance and law that man has sought in vain to alter. Long ago Isaiah proclaimed: "For my thoughts are not your thoughts, neither are your ways my ways, saith the Lord. For as the heavens are higher than the earth so are my ways higher than your ways and my thoughts than your thoughts." (Is. 55). In God's cosmos the plant and the individual evolve according to a universal plan. Individuals, like plants, are good or bad not because they have "free will" but because they are developed or undeveloped. This does not detract from the human being's moral responsibility. The flower is beautiful regardless of whether it is so by choice; and the weed is harmful despite lack of volition. Neither does this counteract the significance of moral suasion. That, itself, is an integral force in the creative process. "Free will versus determinism" consequently becomes irrelevant. The psalmist sang, "Thou . . . art acquainted with all my ways. For there is not a word on my tongue but lo, O Lord, Thou knowest it altogether. . . . Whither shall I go from Thy spirit? Or whither shall I flee from Thy presence? . . . My frame was not hidden from Thee when I was made in secret, and curiously wrought in the lowest parts of the earth. Thine eyes did see mine unformed substance, and in Thy book they were all written — even the days that were fashioned, when as yet there were none of them. . . ." (Psalm 139.) Rabbi Akiba, in Abot 3, and later theologians with self-admitted difficulty distinguished between God's foreknowledge and human freedom in moral conduct.

In God's cosmos, the birth of one nation and the decay of another is all in accordance with a divine law. To paraphrase Amos, the fate of the Ethiopians as well as that of Israel is determined by God. The Jews were "chosen" for the promulgation of religious ideals. They were chosen in the sense that a richer plant is chosen above a poorer one. Of course, the analogy is true only in a basic sense, for in human affairs intelligence and morality enter. Intelligence, here, is defined as an awareness of the forces affecting one's existence. Morality means a consciousness of one's conduct as it affects total existence. Worship of God—not the expression of homage to the deity in order to sway it to grant one's desire, but the fulfillment of God's creation through harmonious and full growth—exists also in the non-human universe. "The heavens declare the glory of God" can mean not only testimony but actual worship.

The Jews, consequently, have made their religious contribution not through blind accident but by design of a Supreme Providence. And as they definitely brought ethical monotheism into (and not to) an idolatrous world, they may also be destined to discover a maturer religion as a daily vital force. As a people, then, our "loss" of religiosity will mean not decay but a stage preparatory to further religious growth. This is not group conceit but an expression of faith in the purposefulness of the Creator's universe and in everything which tends to unfold it.

How Conceive of Jewish Destiny

We have spoken of the present Jewish destiny as being that of continued bearers of religious truths. If this is true, what religious concepts have the Jews evolved, or are the Jews on the verge of evolving that are not already the possessions of others? We have already discussed briefly how our conception of God is maturing. With the exception of a few non-Jewish religious thinkers, the religious world as a whole, because of the war,

preaches a return to old religion. We as a people have learned that passive prayer cannot modify God's course to suit man's wants. Those who believe otherwise are doomed to the disappointments that we have experienced during our long history. We know that God's ways are not to be measured in terms of our desires and dislikes. We are beginning to realize the close relationship between the moral and the material. We know that to worship God means not devotion only but a way of life that utilizes God's laws to further the growth and harmony in creation. This is what holiness means. One expresses most truly his belief in God as a Creator by so living that every thought, emotion and action furthers creation. Injustice becomes a sin, not only against man but against God. Likewise, immorality and unbridled freedom are sins against creation. The individual must strive for and be given the opportunity for complete freedom of growth. He must live a positive life physically and spiritually. He must guard his soul and body. Injustice means, therefore, not only interference with the physical development of another but also with the moral growth of one's self. All this follows organically from the Judaic philosophy and way of life. This may be why Jewish religious leaders, regardless of religious school, are almost all in favor of a social set-up that will allow man's physical and moral development. For unemployment, slums, poor medical services, insecurity and unproductive labor are all in violation of the spirit of holiness, that is, full and harmonious creation.

Who Shall Share in Jewish Destiny?

Jewish destiny will not be the "privilege" of the entire Jewish people. Inability to withstand continual disappointment of Jewish hopes, failure to utilize for personal growth new concepts introduced by science, conditions of life necessitated by modern industry, the material comforts ushered in by both science and industry, the circumstances of early American Jewish life, have all combined to engender in most Jews a void that, unfortunately, will not be filled. For such Jews we should not seek purposeless group survival as an end in itself. For a people cannot be kept alive artificially for too long if its will to live is gone. Only a small group will be vital enough to become a new *She'erit Yisrael,* a remnant to develop our great tradition. This living remnant will not have to be coaxed into Judaism. It will reconstruct the old and find new media for new needs. Impelled by a real *creative divine force,* it may institute a new holiday upon the fall of Hitler. The symbols, ritual and chronicle of the holiday would be such as to make freedom of conscience and of security for the entire world religious ideals, just as the Passover celebration made freedom from tyranny a part of Jewish religion.

The true bearers of Jewish destiny may come from all camps of religious thought but eventually they will unite. They will be united by their deep feeling of the anguish of their people and by their recognition that the rescue of their nation was not blind accident but the consequence of a universal Providence, whose ways are not necessarily those of man, but are none the less purposeful.

HATH NOT A JEW BOOKS?

By Grace Goldin

Mordecai has one good eye,
Needs it to read English by.
Mordecai, to be a Jew
You must learn to read by two—
One to mock at Jews with Saki,
One for Johanan ben Zakkai.

Herrick lilts and Housman pleases
In the idiom of Jesus;
Shakespeare grants a Jew his body;
Milton mixes Christian toddy.
Let our blinded one consider:
Homeland is the Hebrew siddur.

Pater's prose need not mislead you;
Chaucer cannot wholly feed you.
When you tipple with the stranger
You've dipped head-first into danger.
Jews may drink and Jews may frolic
Unembarrassed, with Bialik.

CORRESPONDENCE

RECONSTRUCTIONISM AND THE JEWISH COMMUNITY CENTER

Sirs:

I should like to comment on the correspondence between Julius Fligelman of Los Angeles and the editors of *The Reconstructionist* on the subject of the possible relationship of Jewish Centers to Reconstructionism. The answer of the editors appears to be, first, that the Jewish Centers should carry on a full program of educational, recreational, cultural and civic activities, both Jewish and general, for the membership. This, of course, is the traditional program of the Jewish Center and represents no new undertaking nor any need for a new identification with any other movement.

With regard to the second suggestion, I do not believe that it is possible for Jewish Centers to adopt any kind of religious program, in the sense in which this is generally understood, without organizing some kind of congregation. This would inevitably create a feeling of competition with the other congregations in the community. The suggestion that the Center become a place where religious services of all groups can be held is very appealing, but in the present situation that prevails in Jewish life in this country it is not practicable.

Furthermore, there seems to be no sound reason for objection to differences in Jewish religious philosophy. Religion is a very personal element in the life of an individual and there is a doubtful value in trying to minimize religious differences or in trying to bring about uniformity, directly or indirectly. The thesis of the Jewish Community Center is that it recognizes and, in fact, encourages differences of this character but at the same time seeks to provide a program upon which people can unite in those matters in which all Jews have a common concern.

In effect, the Center recognizes "cultural pluralism" within Jewish life and creates opportunities for the maximum contribution of the different groups in the total interest of the Jewish community.

FRANK L. WEIL
President, National Jewish Welfare Board.

A LETTER FROM THE PHILIPPINES

Sirs:

I just came across a copy of *The Reconstructionist* of March 17, 1944, and enjoyed reading the article by Edward Sandrow on Jews in the Army. As one of the Physician-lay-religious leaders, who have enjoyed the privilege of conducting services in the S. W. Pacific Area for the last two and a half years, my experiences have been substantially those expounded by Chaplain Sandrow. I was especially amused by his felicitous phrase, "gastronomic Judaism," because I had independently arrived at that same characterization as a result of my experiences some time ago.

May I call attention also to the erroneous footnote on Page 12, of the same issue. "Section Eight" in army terminology refers to discharges as a result of undesirable habits and traits of character making the soldier irreclaimable and giving him, in the majority of instances, a discharge without honor (but not dishonorable—the question of honor isn't mentioned). The group of medical psychiatric cases listed in the footnote, except for the very last (psychopathic personality), are recognized medical entities and are given *honorable* discharges and *medically* boarded.

LEONARD S. KRAUSE,
Captain Medical Corp.

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